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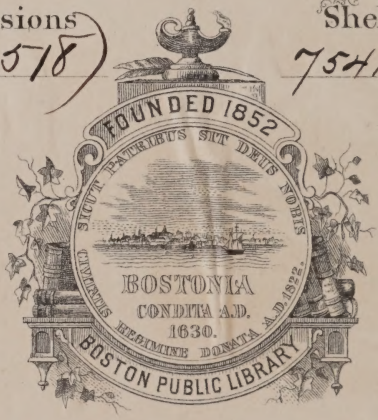

Received May 5, 1892

A PASTOR'S

LAST WORDS TO HIS PEOPLE.

1858.

A Pastor's Last Words to his People.

A

FAREWELL SERMON,

PREACHED TO THE

WINNISIMMET CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH,

CHELSEA, MASSACHUSETTS,

MAY 2, 1858.

BY

ISAAC P. LANGWORTHY.

BOSTON:
PRESS OF T. R. MARVIN & SON, 42 CONGRESS STREET.
1858.

CORRESPONDENCE.

CHELSEA, MAY 12, 1858.

To ISAAC P. LANGWORTHY, *Pastor of the Winnisimmet Church.*

REV. AND DEAR SIR:

By a vote of the Church of which you are Pastor, I am directed to request of you a copy of your Discourse, delivered on the 2d of May, instant, and to cause the same—together with your communication to this Church and the Society connected with it, and the joint action of the Church and Society in reply—to be published for the use of the Church.

In expressing an earnest desire that you will find it consistent with your inclinations and sense of duty, to accede to this request, I do but reflect the very general wish of your numerous friends.

Yours, very truly,

JACOB MITCHELL, *Church Clerk.*

CHELSEA, MAY 19, 1858.

DOCT. MITCHELL:

My Dear Sir,—Yours of the 12th inst. is in hand, and herewith I submit the papers in question to the disposition of the Church.

Yours, affectionately,

ISAAC P. LANGWORTHY.

To the WINNISIMMET CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH *and the* CHESTNUT STREET CONGREGATIONAL SOCIETY, *of Chelsea, Massachusetts.*

MY DEAR FRIENDS:

A necessity, which my utmost exertions and your repeated indulgences and prayers have failed to avert, compels me to sunder the tie that has, for sixteen and a half years, bound us together as

Pastor and People. The pleasantness of this relation has made it very dear to me. You were my first love. And with all sincerity I can say I have neither sought nor desired any other, nor do I now. To be the Pastor of a confiding Church, such as you have been to me, has been and is still my highest earthly ambition; and to occupy any other position within the gift of man or men is, in my view, a descent. But to that downward step the providence of God now evidently calls me. To remain longer here, with my wasting flesh and strength under accumulating anxieties and labors, would be fruitless of good to you and death to me.

I do, therefore, hereby resign my Pastoral and Ministerial relations to you; and after the first Sabbath in May next, I wish to relieve myself from all responsibility for the supply of your pulpit, and, at the same time, to release you from all pecuniary obligations to me. Will you be so kind as to accept this my resignation at your earliest convenience, and unite with me in calling an Ecclesiastical Council to review, and if deemed expedient to sanction, these our doings, either immediately, or on the occasion of the settlement of my successor; which latter event, may the Great Head of the Church hasten in his time!

For the present, this city will be my home. I desire a place still, for my family and myself, in your sympathies, prayers and worship. And whenever I am here, until another shall fill the place I now vacate, you will feel yourselves at liberty to call on me for any service I can render, either to your living or to your dead.

I will only add, that no effort shall be wanting on my part to make our intercourse, in our new relations, as pleasant hereafter as it has been hitherto. My interest in your welfare will remain while life lasts. And now, brethren and friends, if you will "only let your conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ, that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel"—then your past will be only an earnest of a more prosperous and glorious future, and the blessing of the great God will be upon you and yours forever.

In the bonds of Christian love, I am sincerely and cordially yours,

ISAAC P. LANGWORTHY.

Chelsea, April 21, 1858.

To the Rev. ISAAC P. LANGWORTHY, *Pastor of the Winnisimmet Church, connected with the Chesnut St. Congregational Society, Chelsea.*

REV. AND DEAR SIR:

At meetings of said Church and Society, held on the 23d of the last, and on the 11th of the present month, your communication resigning your Pastoral and Ministerial relations to us, was received and acted upon. By concurrent vote of the Church and Society, the undersigned are authorized and directed to inform you that your resignation is accepted, and that whenever it shall seem best, the Church will unite with you "in calling an Ecclesiastical Council to review, and if deemed expedient, to sanction these our doings."

We cannot meet the just expectations of those who commissioned us, or satisfy our own personal desires, without taking this occasion to reply to parts of your communication, not strictly of a business character. Your words, as you cannot doubt, call up thoughts and feelings of deep and solemn interest, giving to them a freshness and a vigor fitted to make them both impressive and profitable to all concerned. The certain past, the conscious present, and the unknown future, all seem to mingle in the same moment, as if striving for the ascendency in our memories and affections. The brief past, the momentary present, and the far-reaching future, are comprehensive in their association and suggestion of all interests which invite, all emotions which agitate the human heart.

Your ministry among us, for more than sixteen eventful years, has been intimately connected with personal, social and public interests. Hopes and fears, joys and griefs, have by turns elated or depressed every heart, calling for the ministration, in public and from house to house, of that gospel which, in its precepts, admonitions, encouragements, and consolations, is divinely adapted to all the changing scenes and exigencies of life. To you and to us all, in different degrees, there come up memories, which, though ever busy, spring into new activity and power, as we read the words and consider the import of your faithful and affectionate communication.

The circumstances in which you became our Pastor, yet press on our memories as well as your own. If, in the gospel ministry, this Church and People were your "first love," we cannot forget that you came hither when, whatever there might be to hope, there was less to invite, and much to awaken solicitude. We were then in a formative state. Our members were few, and our resources small.

Many lions stood in our path, from which the gracious might of the Lord delivered us. He was pleased to make us feel our weakness, that we might distrust ourselves and confide in Him. Hitherto He has helped us. His interposition has been so constant and so signal, that not to be grateful would be both our danger and our shame. To Him be praise and glory forever, for His goodness, and for His wonderful works.

You came to us as a Church and Society, when not only we were small, but when what is now our city, was but a small village, whose future, in population, in prosperity and in character, was all uncertain, and when the religious element was especially needed to determine the character of the place, to promote its various welfare and to give protection and security to all its interests. This great work, however well begun, will never be completed. To make even temporal prosperity lasting, religion must keep busy her beneficent hand. The maxim is ever true, that "Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." But while we recognize His upholding might and superintending care, He has taught us also to remember that His richest bounties are bestowed by appropriate means; and that neither the kingdom of nature nor of grace can be advanced or sustained without them. He has taught us to esteem very highly in love, for their work's sake, such as labor among us and are over us in the Lord, and admonish us; and that if we love not our visible benefactors, we shall not be apt to love the unseen Giver of every good and perfect gift. It would therefore be unbecoming, and ill accord with the promptings of our own hearts, not to recognize the kind watchfulness, the open-hearted fidelity and the unwearied efforts of your ministry to this Church and Society. We gratefully recognize in your hand, under God, an agency that has built us up, and made our present condition a contrast to what it was when you came among us. Nor would it be generous here to omit the expression of a sentiment which we cannot but entertain, and which we have reason to know is shared by others, our fellow-citizens, that not only we as a Church and Society, but our city itself, should regard you as a benefactor. Your heart and your hand have both been busy to promote individual welfare by the common good. We thank you for your abundant labors, and your more abundant good-will;—for the good you have already accomplished, and for that as yet unseen good which, in the providence of

God, will, as we trust, be unfolding itself in future years; to bless many who will not see or know the hand from which it more remotely comes.

Grateful to Heaven for the past, earnestly thanking the Father of all mercies that the closing days of your ministerial labors with us, have been so signally blessed by the effusions of His grace, and assured that our future is in the hand of God, while we are encouraged by the great things he has done for us in our conscious weakness and dependence, we would not be high-minded, but fear, knowing that humility, watchfulness, mutual forbearance and fidelity, are ways which God is accustomed to bless. We thank you for the good counsel, expressed in the language of earnest desire for our steadfastness in the faith and fellowship of the gospel of Christ. As we have had experience that it is good for brethren to dwell together in unity, we ask your fervent prayers that we may have wisdom to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, thus honoring the Great Shepherd who leadeth his flock into green pastures, by the side of still waters.

May the blessing of Heaven rest on you and yours, restoring the health whose loss has caused the sundering of ties so close, and by us so affectionately cherished, and opening some field of labor in which you may continue to serve God in the gospel of His Son, with even more abundant success.

Grateful in the expectation of your continuance for a while in our neighborhood, and not unmindful of the kind offer of your occasional services, we subscribe ourselves, in behalf of the Church and Society, with the assurance of our high personal regard,

Very affectionately, yours,

GEO. ALLEN, Jr.
JEREMIAH CAMPBELL.
RUFUS S. FROST.

Chelsea, May 11, 1858.

SERMON.

2 CORINTHIANS VII. 3.

FOR I HAVE SAID BEFORE, THAT YE ARE IN OUR HEARTS TO DIE AND LIVE WITH YOU."

PAUL'S attachment to the Christians at Corinth was tender and strong. Such was his love for them that, had Providence seemed so to direct, he would have preached the gospel and watched for souls there until he should have been called to his rest.

Many a minister since Paul's day has formed similar attachments; and from the love he bore the people of his charge, he has honestly and sincerely desired to abide with them, and, according to his ability, to break to them the bread of life while the powers of his being should be continued to him.

I affirm no more than is emphatically true, when I say, on my own and the behalf of those dearest to me,—as I have often said before,—"that ye are in our hearts to die and live with you." Our long residence here has not been a necessity, but a pleasure. Pecuniary and social considerations have not compelled it. But, up to the present, that kind Providence, which shapes all our ends,

has seemed to indicate a continuance of the connection which, November 10, 1841, was so happily formed between us. I claim not to have always met the wishes of any, or ever to have given satisfaction to some. Nor does the review of the past afford me no ground for deep regrets for unfaithfulness;—more, however, as a pastor, than as a preacher; more as a Christian, than either or both together. But I cannot charge myself with intentional neglect of the interests committed to my care, or of failing to be, in some degree, sensible of the varied responsibilities resting upon me. And I wish here, in this public manner, to tender you my deep and heartfelt gratitude for the patient kindness with which you have borne with my infirmities, and for the favor with which you have been pleased to receive my imperfect labors on your behalf. It were an impeachment of your knowledge of your own rights, and of your manly independence, and of your sense of responsibility as a congregation, to suppose that, as a body, you have not desired the perpetuity of the relation so harmoniously subsisting between us in the past. My return to you, last January, was based upon that assumption, and I was controlled by no other motive than a sense of plain duty, encouraged with the hope of seeing what we have realized, and with the fixed purpose, on my part, of perpetuating this relationship so long as health and your good will would permit. And no other arrangement on my part, or more inviting field, or higher bid for my poor services have, of late or ever, for a moment tempted me to swerve from that purpose.

But all will see that there is now a necessity in the case, dictated not less by a due regard to your highest good than to the preservation of my own life. I cannot do the mental and physical work that needs here to be done, without the speedy sacrifice of that to which duty seems not to call, and upon which my family still has a claim; and it is for this sole reason that I bid you farewell to-day.

So frequently, and so recently, have the facts of our history been brought before you, that it is not deemed essential to allude to them in any detail on the present occasion. It is sufficient to say that we came together as a church, of forty-one members, from some thirty families, September 20, 1841; that we have erected three places of worship; that we have contributed for strictly benevolent objects, beyond our own limits, some twenty-one thousand dollars; that we have received to this church, on profession of their faith, two hundred and seventy-six, and on letters of dismission and recommendation, three hundred and sixty-five individuals; that we have furnished the nuclei, or body and strength, of three other churches; that we have sent, in young converts and in professing Christians, some life and vigor to many other churches, while we have preserved to this church a membership of about three hundred; and now we separate amid the general seriousness of the congregation and the sighs of penitence from not a few, and the new joys of a goodly number of young converts; which, altogether, may be regarded as a result calling for thanksgivings to him

who is the great Author of it all. To which of the many instruments he will award the richest crown, we cannot now know, nor does it matter. It is, however, some satisfaction to your retiring pastor to feel that, while he knows he has not contributed all he ought, yet he has not hindered a result embracing so much present and prospective good.

And now, while I hope that, in the good providence of God, I may many times meet you face to face, and occasionally stand in this place and address you, yet as I can never, in the same relations and with the same mutual responsibilities from this position, again speak to you, I deem it both a duty and a privilege to say, with great plainness, a few things; and if in any sense, because they are the last, they will be the longest remembered, it will be only the more gratifying to me.

I. Let each cultivate a closer personal walk with God.

It is but just to say, that I have witnessed, with great satisfaction, an evident growth in grace on the part of a goodly number of this church. You have profited by the means of grace available here, and by the discipline to which, through a kind Providence, you have been subjected. And though thus much cannot be said of all, perhaps, yet it is believed that there has been generally some religious progress, some strengthening and deepening of religious principle. But you who have experienced most even, will with Paul say,

that you have not already attained, and that you are not already perfect; and while you are most willing to make this concession, I do want you, every one, to be able to add with Paul: "But I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." It is your privilege in all truthfulness to say: "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Just as there is a depth of penitence and true humiliation, and entireness of consecration, and a completeness of submission, and brokenness of heart, yet unknown to you, so is there a nearness to Christ, an experience of his love and of himself as a power, as an ever-present, perfectly-adapted and all-sufficient Saviour yet unknown to us all. As there is a lower deep than the humblest has reached, so is there a loftier hight than the most advanced has attained. From that lower deep let every one rise to the summit where perfect love reigns. And for any one to say or feel, that he has apprehended, or has reached the high level he desires, or is at all content with the attainments already made, and does not watch, and pray, and strive, and labor, for more and more, is to give fearful evidence that what he has is not of the kind which will stand the final test. What then I desire for every one of you, as for myself, is a closer, personal walk with God; is a hope in Christ, based upon a faith which brings him into

the soul, which unites us to him by a living connection,—a faith which makes us victorious over the world, and which works by love. I desire for every one of you a religion which is of evident practical value to you; which makes you ordinarily happy; of which, in all humility, yet with assured confidence, you can speak; of which you never will be ashamed. I want to walk with every one of you up the rugged ascent of the strait and narrow way to our Father's home. I want to tread with every one of you that path which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. All this is your privilege, your duty,—may I not say your necessity. The facilities for all this are at your present command. You have only to renew that consecration, making it specific and entire, and to receive a waiting and perfect Saviour, "who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." This closer, personal walk with God, is essential to your happiness; is essential, oh, how essential, to your greater usefulness; is eminently essential to the faithful discharge of these new obligations coming upon you, as well as for your completer felicities in that better world whither you go.

II. Let each cultivate a stronger love for every other.

To deepen and strengthen personal religion, will eminently promote brotherly love; and herein is a cogent reason for the individual consecration and faith just urged. For without strong attachments one to another, growing out of your stronger love

to Christ, it is certain that dissensions and divisions will ensue. One tie that has contributed to your oneness, hitherto, is this day sundered. And in addition, the new responsibilities which you necessarily assume, involve questions which, at the best, will put to a severe test your strength of fraternal affection. I beg you to see that the measure which has sufficed for the past, and has at least kept you together, will be wholly inadequate to the exigencies of the future. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. You have not been so perfectly assimilated as a church, and you do not so well understand each other, as you would had this city always been your home, and this your only place of worship. There is hence a want of homogeneity which would otherwise obtain. And when you come together it would not be strange, if "every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation." There must be, my brethren, a love so strong one for another, that each shall be willing to make large concessions on all matters of mere preference or precedence. You will remember that, though Diotrephes is dead, his mantle has fallen upon many in the churches. The precept of the Apostle is apposite here: "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love, in honor preferring one another." Yes, in honor, preferring one another. And let no man of you think more highly of himself than he ought to think. It is more noble and Christian to wait to be called into the place of pre-eminence, than to rush there unbidden. So is it more noble and Christian to yield

mere feeling or will to the eleven, than, by obstinacy and pertinacity, to bring the eleven to you. "Hold fast a principle, but with a limber elbow." Go always and every way, with every one, just as far, for the sake of harmony and peace, as the unfailing adhesion to the right will allow. You will have very, very strong temptations to the opposite course. If jealousy, if envy, if aught of malice be indulged, alienation, distance and difficulties will ensue, to be healed, God only knows how or when. Or if you admit mere coldness one toward another, and a standing aloof and a failing to recognize each other as brethren, then will this little beginning very soon widen into a breach not easily bridged over. Or, if ye fail for any reason to cultivate this love, Christian love, each one for every other, then you open the door for the incoming and reigning of every wrong feeling, and thus for the very worst difficulties. Let me, as Christ's ambassador, entreat you as I love Him and you, to love one another out of pure hearts fervently. So love, that you can be very patient with every brother's idiosyncrasies; also with his wide dissent from you. So love that, while you labor to bring all to see as you see, at the same time and with the same earnestness you will strive to see as they do. So love, that you can bear a great deal every way, without breaking the cords that bind you together. So love, that you can forgive every one his trespasses, as you hope to be forgiven of God for your own. So love, that you shall all together experience "how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

III. Let each cultivate more and more the spirit of true Christian benevolence.

This topic might be more appropriately considered, perhaps, in another connection. But its importance justifies a distinct notice.

I am happy to bear witness to the generosity with which you have met many an appeal on behalf of objects of real want. In comparison with many other congregations of your means, you would suffer nothing. But when it is remembered that our liberality is to be tried by another and a much higher standard in the last day, and when it is remembered, also, from how few three-fourths that we have given has come, we find no ground for self-congratulations. Nay, I tremble on your behalf, lest He whose is the gold and the silver should be compelled, in His love, to deal severely with many of you, or with yours, because with your substance, and the first-fruits of your increase, you honor Him not. And I shall tremble yet the more for you, if the established and important objects, for which your annual gifts are sought, fail to receive at least as full and cheerful a response hereafter, as has been granted heretofore. There is danger that such will not be the case, if for any considerable time you shall be without a pastor. A result so much to be deplored, can be averted only by the inflexible purpose of every one to cultivate more and more a spirit of true Christian benevolence. I do not affirm that each should, or should not, necessarily give more than hitherto; but I would forefend against the clamors of a worldly, and hence a purely selfish prudence,

whose constant cry is,—"Charity always begins at home;" and as a consequence, such charity usually ends at home, and hence is no charity at all. Take care, oh man, lest, while you are striving to recover lost possessions, or gain a competency, you defeat the very end you have in view by withholding from the Lord's treasury that which his cause demands from you. There can be, in the Divine eyes, no more criminal fraud than this. I beg you circumscribe anywhere and everywhere else, before you diminish your contributions. To hoard or invest in business, or expend on unnecessary personal conveniences or equipage, the Lord's money, will cost us or ours very dear. Be careful, friends. Be careful at this vital point. There is danger here; danger lest Christ at the last shall be compelled to say to some of you,—"Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me."

IV. Let each cultivate a spirit of undeviating fidelity to Christ in all relations.

We are faithful to Christ only when, for his sake, we fulfill all his claims upon us, springing from the various objects and positions with which our Christian life is identified. The last-named, that of liberal giving, is one of them. For, if we fail to recognize and acknowledge Christ in his poor, who seek and deserve alms from our hands, He will not recognize nor acknowledge us when we confront his neglected ones at the judgment-seat. So in regard to certain positions which, as Christians, we are called upon to fill, and the neglect of which is also criminal and culpable neglect of Christ.

Your place in the sanctuary, for example. It is wrong to vacate it at any time, without a very good reason. Your silent, but wakeful and prayerful presence, is a means of grace to you and to others. It will seem more criminal to be needlessly away, in the new circumstances into which you now come, for the first time, in your history as a church. In the absence of an under-shepherd, the sheep are sometimes inclined to take large liberties, and nothing, often, but a severe scourging, will bring them back. I entreat you to provoke upon yourselves no such chastisements. If you must, to gratify curiosity or itching ears, go occasionally elsewhere, wait until you have a pastor to hold the rest of the flock together. You will be strongly tempted to do otherwise. With the best your committee of supply can do, sometimes the preacher for the day will fail particularly to edify or interest you. Then may we not go elsewhere, or stay at home? you ask. No, no, beloved; never, never for such a reason. That would be a poor sermon from which you could not get some useful truth. But if even this were not possible, still for Christ's sake you should fill your place in his house. He will feed and bless you; when, if you went away, and were entranced by the most thrilling eloquence, he might send leanness to your soul. It may be a severe trial to your patience and faith, sometimes; but the trial of your faith is precious. Suffer urgent entreaty on this point. It has great importance attached to it. For the sake of those whom Christian principle and responsibility will compel to be always present—for, blessed be God! there

are some such—be you here. For the sake of those who will be influenced by your example, as for your own sake, whatever others may do, be you here. In love to the church, for her character as united, as faithful to every trust, as always represented in her appointed gatherings, be you here. For the sake of obtaining the best man to fill this vacancy in the shortest time,—who will be greatly influenced by your fidelity in this particular,—be you here. And above all, for Christ's sake, fail not to be always here, unless he evidently calls you elsewhere.

And so at the stated prayer meetings. This is a position in which your fidelity to Christ is tested. All that has been said of the value and necessity of your presence in the sanctuary, may, with equal truth and perhaps for stronger reasons, be said of the value and importance of your being ever punctual at the prayer meetings. How can ye love Christ, or be true to his claims, and not so love the prayer meetings as to make great sacrifices to be uniformly there! They have been and still are, the right arm of this church. The existing type and strength of practical religion, and the frequency and thoroughness of conversions, have always answered to the character of the prayer meetings. Can a Christian lightly esteem them? or be needlessly away from them? or fail to love and to do all he can to sustain them? I see not how. This is a vital matter. It lies at the foundation of Christian character. It involves both love to God and love to man. And how those who claim to be Christ's, and yet uniformly neglect

the prayer meetings, expect to reach heaven, is not apparent. Look ye well to this, and fill your places in these devotional gatherings, if you would bless this church and save your own souls.

I feel quite sure, that one hitherto bright star of hope to this church will not now become dim, or shine with less effulgency. That praying circle of sisters on Tuesday afternoon—how often has the report from its fervent and tearful petitions sent joy and gladness through the heart of your pastor! Would God that its members might be greatly increased! Heaven's rich blessings will be upon those who will not suffer the fires of a pure devotion upon that altar to die out. Ye faithful, happy few, look up and trust still! God will add to your numbers now, and soon give you the desire of your hearts!

Your position in the Sabbath school, whether as superintendent, teacher, or pupil, whether as a giver of good or a direct receiver, are important positions; and fidelity to Christ and the interests of this church call upon you to fill them with scrupulous punctuality. This is a field that ought to embrace every disciple of Christ, not obviously exempt, because it is one of so much promise. It is literally the nursery of the church. How can you stay out of it? Come in, one and all, with a spirit of love to Christ and souls; come, ready to fill any useful niche, and thus in doing good, you will receive the greater good.

There are many other important positions of which I cannot speak. This church sustains intimate relations to this city, and always has. You

will meet the demands growing out of these relations, and let not your character for activity, for readiness to respond to the calls of the poor, or to seek out the neglected and to carry the bread of life to every starving soul, suffer. As good citizens, you will stand shoulder to shoulder in defence of the truth—as promoters of good order, as patrons of good schools, as champions of equal rights, as examples of every virtue, lending a willing hand to forward every enterprise which embraces the public good. Fidelity to Christ requires this of you, every one.

V. Let every one, not now a Christian, at once become so.

This is the time, here the place. In the mind of every one there is truth enough. With every one the Spirit now strives. And delay for any thing is most perilous. You know your duty, every one of you. The keenest pang I suffer, in this separation, is occasioned by the fear that I must leave some of you still unreconciled to God. The sacrifice of my life were a trifle, compared with the boon of seeing you all in the fold of Christ. From my deepest heart I love you, and would fain bring you to the Saviour's feet. You have shown me much kindness, for which accept my sincere thanks. But to a completeness of our joy here, or yours hereafter, you must be changed; you must be born again. We part here in good social fellowship. But oh, how shall we meet before that great white throne! Will you compel me to be a witness against you there? I have tried to be faithful to your souls.

It has been my purpose to free my skirts from your blood. I frankly confess that my Christian life has not enforced my precepts as it ought, and may God avert ill from you, in consequence!

But I should be untrue to myself if I should not say, that it has ever been my heart's desire and prayer for you, that ye might be saved. And now, once more, as your Pastor in Jesus' name, it is my privilege to beseech you to be reconciled to God. There is an open door. A cordial welcome awaits you. To-day is the accepted time—is a day of mercy. The Holy Spirit is hovering over you, is striving with you, is urging you with gentle entreaties to come to Christ now. Oh, do not, dare not, for your soul's sake, resist the drawings of the Holy Spirit! This is a peculiar time—a period of blessing—an hour of favor. This is a solemn place, because God is here to save and to seal; yes, to save and to seal. For which world, oh immortal, will you be sealed? In which eternity will you make your home? With fiends or angels, you must forever dwell. Your soul must be gathered with transgressors and the rebellious, or with the saints and angels. With which? This is a moment of decision. Eternal interests are staked upon the purpose you now form. Art thou, great God, saying, "Let them alone; they are joined to their idols?" These words have rung in my ears, for the last few days, with fearful significance. I have strove and prayed against their realization in your individual cases; and now it is possible, nay, easier than ever it can be again, if indeed it shall ever again be possible for you, to close in with

offered mercy, and make heaven certain to your undying souls. Will you not at last be persuaded? Come, give up the controversy. Can I not prevail upon you to do these three things, reasonable and right: first, solemnly to determine, at any cost, to take care of the soul. Say, oh man! say, oh woman! say, oh precious youth! in your deepest heart, say, "I yield; I bow my will to Christ's; I start for heaven to-day; I begin a new life to-day; I come over on to the Lord's side to-day. Let others do as they may, as for me, I will serve the Lord. This is my solemn, my unchanging purpose; so help me, my God." Do you thus purpose? Then, secondly, when you go home, on your knees, alone, renew this consecration in solemn words expressed to Christ; and then, thirdly, come and see me to-night in yonder room of blessing, and let us, it may be for the last time, talk it over together; and God, even our God, will ratify in heaven the good work thus begun here and now on the earth.

But I must not longer detain you, though I have many things of which I would love to speak. I find myself bound to you by many and very tender ties. I have been with you in many scenes of both joy and sorrow. It has been my delight to respond to your calls, and to meet you whereever I could bless you. I have buried your dead. I have baptized and married many of you and of your children. The strength of my ministerial life has been expended here; to what purpose, the great day will more fully reveal. My domestic relations were formed since I became your minister. My chil-

dren have been born here, two of whom are not,* for God hath taken them. If the best medical skill, if the best nursing, if earnest prayers would have saved them, they would have continued unto this present. God will reward you for your fidelity to us and to them, while they were with us; and for your kindness and sympathy in that and in our more recent bereavement.† The two children who survive, know no home but this, and few friends but you. And while it is denied to their father to live with you as your Pastor, it may be his, earlier than he hopes, to die with you. In such an event, let me lay these dear ones upon your hearts for such love, counsel and care as the widow and the fatherless need.

To the officers of this church I owe and here tender public thanks. They have been very patient and forbearing with me. I loved the noble man ‡ who, alone among these, has fallen in death. His associate, now your senior deacon, I first knew among you all, and his house first opened its doors to me when an entire stranger here, and it became my first home, and has ever since been such to me and mine. I know not whether to call him, and his true and faithful companion, father and mother, or brother and sister. They have often filled the places of both to me. May they long live to bless their own family, this church and the world.

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* Cyrus Williams, who died Sept. 4, 1849, aged 5 years; Antoinette North, who died August 18, 1849, aged 2 years, 7½ months.

† Mrs. Martha Williams, mother of Mrs. L., who died suddenly, Sabbath, Dec. 27, 1857.

‡ Dea. Josiah Bacon, who died at Chelsea, October 3, 1852.

With our several superintendents* I have had a perfect understanding, and have ever found them cordial and faithful coadjutors in our mutual work. The present incumbent has more than doubled his years, since I have been his pastor; and for his acceptable and faithful labors in our large Sabbath school, and no less for his patient and self-sacrificing exertions to sustain the responsibilities of the orchestra with the chosen few who are there, my heart swells with true gratitude. But it seems almost invidious to specify, when I feel so much your debtor for your sympathies and co-operation; for the varied substantial tokens of respect both to me and mine, from the congregation at large, from our ladies, from our young men, from all.

I shall be pardoned if I express a deep and tender interest in the recently converted among you. Let me assure them Christ will be their Shepherd, their unfailing friend, if now, with more confidence and hope, they will lean upon him. Think not, my beloved, that you must relapse into coldness. Think not that your joys must be necessarily less. Cultivate a nearness to Christ. Never leave him for a moment; and labor assiduously and continually for the conversion of all whom your influence can reach. This good work need not, must not cease. If you, with the more experienced, will give yourselves to this work, and prove faithful to Christ in every relation, it will increase in extent and depth and power, and there is no reason why

* Hosea Ilsley, Micajah Haskell, who died at Chelsea, Oct. 30, 1850; Matthew F. Wood, now of Boston; F. D. Ellis, now of West Roxbury; Horace E. Smith, Esq., now of New York; and R. S. Frost.

it should not. Let the older Christians watch over, and lead along, and encourage the younger. This is an important and an indispensable duty; and this is one of the ways in which this religious interest can be perpetuated. Let every one cultivate a closer personal walk with God, a stronger love for every other. Let every one cultivate undeviating fidelity to Christ, in every relation and position; in the closet, at the family altar, at the prayer meeting, in the social circle, in business, in the sanctuary, everywhere. And as ye go up together to receive another ascension gift, see "that ye fall not out by the way." In the strength of your brotherly love is your safety, is the earnest of your successful future. Wherever I am, I shall watch your progress with an interest felt for no other church. At the sight of the name of this loved flock, my pulse will beat quicker, and my heart respond warmer, than at the name of any other. And from this place let me cordially welcome you all to our hearts, and also to our home, wherever it may be.

And now, will you not to-day pledge Christ anew in his symbols, soon to be received, and one another in your communion together, a love and a fidelity before unknown? If this I can persuade you now to do, then these last words will be more blessed to you, than any I have ever before uttered in your hearing. And,—"Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you." AMEN AND AMEN.

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